

Cole Motor Car Company Factory
(now Service Supply Co., Inc.)
730 East Washington Street
Indianapolis
Marion County
Indiana

HABS No. IND-71

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D. C. 20240

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. IND-71

COLE MOTOR CAR COMPANY FACTORY
(NOW SERVICE SUPPLY CO., INC.)

Location: 730 East Washington Street, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana.

Present Owner: Service Supply Company.

Present Use: Storage.

Statement of Significance: In the early years of the Twentieth Century Indianapolis was one of several centers in the United States where automobiles were manufactured. The Cole Motor Car Company building is a good example of simple commercial architecture. The type of reinforced concrete principal load-bearing structure found in this building was in its first decade of general use in the United States.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: ca. 1910-1911. (R. L. Polk and Company's Indianapolis City Directory for 1910, Indianapolis, 1910).
2. Architect: Not known.
3. Original and subsequent owners: Legal description of property: The property lies at the east end of the city block bounded on the north by East Market Street, on the east by North Davidson Street, on the south by East Washington Street, and on the west by elevated railroad tracks. The site is composed of parcels 8, 9, and 10 of outlots 66 and 67.

Original owner of the building was the Cole Motor Car Company, founded in 1907.

1967 Cole Motor Car Company Buildings were sold to Service Supply Company.

4. Original plan and construction: The 1910 building is rectangular in plan, approximately 100' (3 bays) x 390' (18 bays) (scaled from Sanborn Fire Maps). The width of the building is divided into three bays: the central bay is approximately 40' and the two flanking bays are about 30' each. At the time this building was constructed these spans were unusually large for a principal load-bearing structure with a reinforced concrete

frame. This building is eighteen bays deep. The ninth bay from the front is about 30' wide; the remaining seventeen bays are all about 20' wide.

The facade is white glazed brick with limestone cornice, pier capitals, second floor window sill, and three plaques at the top center of each bay carved with the word "Cole." The reinforced concrete frame and hollow tile infill panels are visible on the other three walls of the building. On those three sides, window sashes are principally the small-paned, steel, industrial type.

5. Alterations and additions: The westward projecting rear wing is similar to the rear portions of the 1910 structure and was added in 1911.

The most obvious alteration is the substitution of modern aluminum store-front window detailing on the first floor and commercial aluminum sashes in the two upper stories of the facade. At all levels the top light of the windows is black glass, indicating a suspended ceiling within. Although the date of such work is not known, it is quite probable that it was done after the 1967 sale of the building.

In 1951 a wooden trestle on concrete piers and a concrete shipping dock adjoining it were built along the west side of the structure. A railroad siding connected at the northwest corner of the property with the elevated railroad tracks nearby.

In 1919 an additional factory building, across East Market Street and to the north of the first buildings, was under construction. In early 1920 the company planned to raze the original factory building and to construct another larger factory building on the site (Herschell). The site of the 1919 structure was, in 1971, a parking lot. The Sanborn Fire Maps (post 1951) show a warehouse at the northwest corner of East Washington and North Davidson with wooden posts noted.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Joseph J. Cole, Sr. was born on March 23, 1869 in Connorsville, Indiana, the son of a farmer. Cole graduated from high school and attended Richmond Business College at Richmond, Indiana. From 1888 to 1896 he worked for Parry Manufacturing Company, in Indianapolis. This company made road carts. In 1896 Cole changed jobs and was named sales representative of the entire western territory for Moon Brothers Carriage Company, of St. Louis, Missouri. In 1904 Cole resigned from the Moon Company and returned to Indianapolis. There he bought out Gates-Osborne Buggy Company and

organized the Cole Carriage Company. The Cole Carriage Company was replaced by the Cole Motor Car Company, founded in 1907 with a \$5,000 investment. By 1908 the company had begun manufacturing automobiles. The company was incorporated the following year and Cole served as its president until his death in August, 1925.

The Cole Motor Car Company Factory was, from 1918-1921 the second largest builder of quality automobiles in the United States. After World War I the plant size was doubled by construction of a four-story reinforced concrete building "at the rear of the main factory. It has been used principally for storage purposes in the last four or five years." From 1924-1925 the company was in the process of liquidation.

In 1923 the company was a \$5 million corporation. Cole had gone into auto racing at the proper time and used it to establish a reputation of his cars. When airplanes became a fad, the first coast-to-coast flight was in the Cole Flyer (Indianapolis Men of Affairs, 1923).

C. Sources of Information:

1. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Plat maps and Sanborn Fire Maps at the Assessor's Office,
City-County Building, Indianapolis.

b. Secondary and published sources:

"Cole Motor Car Company Buildings Sold to Service Star Supply Company," Indianapolis Star, July 14, 1967, p. 34, column 1.

Herschell, William. "Old Speedway Sign 'Make Indianapolis Greatest Automobile City' is Being Realized in the Millions that are Spent on Motor Projects," Indianapolis News, December 20, 1915, p. 15.

"Joseph J. Cole, Pioneer Auto Manufacturer Here is Dead," Indianapolis Star, August 8, 1925, p. 1.

Indianapolis Men of Affairs, 1923. Indianapolis, 1923.

R. L. Polk and Co.'s Indianapolis City Directory for 1910. Indianapolis, 1910.

2. Likely sources not yet investigated:
 - a. Chain of title for the property.
 - b. Indianapolis Times, November 30, 1960, p. 13, column 2.
Short history of the Cole Motor Company.
 - c. De Lancy, Howard R., The History of the Cole Motor Car Company. (Unpublished D.B.A. thesis in business, Indiana University, 1954).
 - d. De Lancy, Howard R., "The Cole Motor Car Company." Business History Review, (Boston) XXX (1956), p. 260-273.

Prepared by Wesley I. Shank
Architectural Historian
National Park Service
December 1971

PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

- A. General Statement: The type of reinforced concrete load-bearing structure found in this building was in its first decade of general use in the United States.
 1. Architectural character: Simple commercial character.
 2. Condition of fabric: Good.
- B. Description of Exterior:
 1. Over-all dimensions: 3 bay south front (approx. 100') x 18 bay side (approx. 390').
 2. Foundations: Concrete.
 3. Wall construction, finish and color: Reinforced concrete structure with hollow tile infill panels is exposed on three sides. The street facade is of white glazed brick with limestone trim.
 4. Structural system, framing: Reinforced concrete load-bearing structure.
 5. Chimneys: Large exterior chimney at southwest corner of building.

6. Openings:

- a. Doorways and doors: Modern aluminum door at southwest corner of building.
- b. Windows and shutters: Modern aluminum store-front windows on first floor and aluminum commercial sashes in the two upper stories. At all levels the top light of the windows is black glass. Sides and rear have small-paned steel industrial sash.

7. Roof:

- a. Shape: Flat.
- b. Cornice: The simple limestone cornice is pierced by the geometrically decorated caps of the four piers of the facade. Just below the cornice in the center of each bay is a decorative limestone panel with the name "Cole."

Prepared by Candace Reed
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April 1977

PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was part of a cooperative project conducted in 1970 by the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana and the Historic American Buildings Survey. The project was under the general direction of James C. Massey, Chief of the Historic American Buildings Survey.